Cover: Inscriptions from Mahadevan's Corpus.

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This work contains the following original research essays and articles:

Preliminary Observations on Symbol Correspondence Between the Vinca and Indus Sign Systems: including Decipherment of Indus Script

10.5281/zenodo.18872166

The Lexicon of the Indus Script (LIS)

10.5281/zenodo.20277941

The Decipherment of the Indus Script

Despite this brief musing, it is of this author's opinion that these symbols are not traditional visarga if any at all (see below).

The Nandi Bull, Indus Script Seals, and the Shoulder Mark

The recurring bull motif in the Indus script corpus has long been recognized as one of the most stable and symbolically charged elements of the civilization's iconography. When this motif is compared with later Hindu religious imagery - particularly the Nandi bull associated with Śiva - the parallels become increasingly difficult to dismiss as coincidental. A striking point of continuity is the presence of a distinctive shoulder-mark on both Indus bull seals and later depictions of Nandi. In several Indus examples, the bull bears a compact, oval/triangular sign on its shoulder containing the symbol. This sign is not ornamental; it functions as a semantic operator within the Indus inscriptional system, and its placement on the bull is deliberate.

Mahadevan Plate 1-3

Within the Indo-Aryan linguistic tradition, the *stha* family of roots is associated with standing, establishing, placing, or fixing - a semantic field that aligns precisely with the ritual and cosmological role of the bull as the "standing one," the axis of stability, and the bearer of cosmic order. The later Vedic epithet *Sthāṇu*, applied to Śiva, literally means "the Standing One," and the bull Nandi becomes the living emblem of this state. The appearance of sign on the shoulder of the Indus bull therefore suggests that the Indus scribes were marking the bull not merely as an animal but as a ritualized, divine, or cosmological figure whose identity was defined by "standing".

The discovery of the inscriptional form *sthama,* which corresponds to the nominalized form of *stha* ("the standing one," "the established one"), further strengthens this interpretation. If *stha* appears as a shoulder-mark on the bull and *sthama* appears as a title within the inscriptional corpus, then the Indus system preserves both the operator and the deity-title forms of the same root. This mirrors the later Sanskrit relationship between *stha*, *sthita*, and *Sthāṇu*, and suggests that the Indus bull was already conceptualized as a divine or semi-divine being embodying the cosmic standing.

Taken together, the bull iconography, the shoulder-mark containing the *stha* symbol, and the appearance of *sthama* in the textual corpus indicate that the Indus tradition encoded a

standing-state deity structurally equivalent to the later Śaiva Nandi–Sthāṇu epithet. This continuity supports the broader argument that the Indus script preserves an early Indo-Aryan ritual vocabulary and that its religious symbolism is not proto-Vedic but already aligned with the fully developed conceptual world of early Vedic religion.

The "Standing One" Reconsidered: From Abstraction to Action

Within the long history of Sanskrit interpretation and Śaiva theology, the epithet often translated as "the Standing One" has been consistently explained through abstraction. The term - derived from the root *sthā*, "to stand, remain, abide" - has been read as a metaphysical designation. Śiva is said to "stand" because he is immovable, because he abides beyond time, because he functions as the cosmic axis, or because he remains unchanged while the universe unfolds around him. In other contexts, the term has been linked to ascetic posture: the yogin who stands in stillness, withdrawn from motion, fixed in meditative endurance.

Each of these explanations shares a common feature: they remove the word from any immediate, visual, or situational context. "Standing" becomes philosophical. It becomes symbolic. It becomes something to be interpreted rather than something to be seen.

But this raises a critical question: what if the term was never meant to be abstract in the first place?

When we turn to the Indus seal corpus, we encounter a striking and highly specific visual motif. A central figure - appearing in both male and female forms - stands upright while grasping two attacking tigers, one in each hand. The animals are not passive. They are mid-strike, lunging inward. The figure does not flee, recoil, or bend. Instead, the body remains upright, fixed, and controlled. The force of the attack is met directly - and halted.

At left is the typical male figure "standing firm".

Female deity standing firm against animal attack with stha sign above her head - the same sign associated with the bull: *stha (sa + tha)*

The implications of this are immediate and profound.

In this context, *stha* does not describe an abstract metaphysical principle. It does not denote cosmic stillness or philosophical permanence. It describes exactly what is happening in the scene. The figure is standing - not merely in posture, but in action. The figure stands firm. The figure does not move under attack.

The meaning is not hidden. It is not symbolic in the later theological sense. It is demonstrative.

The figure stands while being attacked - and does not yield.

This reading gains further strength from repetition. The same compositional structure appears in more than one instance, and critically, it is not limited to a single gendered form. Both male and female figures are depicted in this identical stance: upright, controlled, resisting dual animal force. The term, therefore, cannot be restricted to a single divine identity. It is describing a state of being or demonstrated capability - one that is visually encoded and consistently applied.

In this light, “the Standing One” is not a distant theological abstraction imposed after the fact. It is a direct and literal descriptor of a specific, repeatable iconographic condition:

the one who remains standing under attack.
the one who does not yield.
the one who holds position against force.

What later traditions interpret as metaphysical immovability may, in fact, originate in something far more immediate: the visible act of resisting and mastering violent force without displacement. The philosophical meaning is not the origin - it is the inheritance. The so-called “Standing One” is not standing in theory. The Standing One is standing because *they* do not fall.

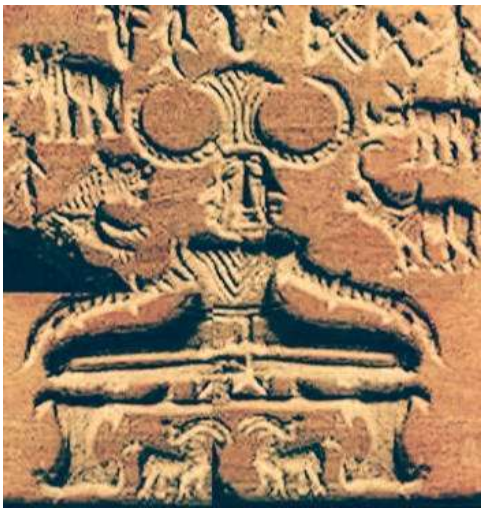
Furthermore, the application of *stha* is not confined to a single figure or even a single scene. It appears across a broader range of powerful beings within the visual corpus, including not only the tiger-confronting figure and the bull (Nandi), but also animals such as elephants and rhinoceroses. In each case, the common denominator is unmistakable: these are beings defined by their capacity to resist force, to hold position, and to remain unmoved.

However, this pattern does not originate with the animals themselves. The theme is already established in the figure identified with Śiva - depicted standing firm while restraining attacking predators. The animals, therefore, are not the source of the meaning but its extension. They serve as natural-world analogues of the same principle: visible embodiments of immovability.

The term, then, does not function as a proper name or exclusive divine title. It operates as a classificatory marker - designating a state of physical dominance and resistance to force first demonstrated in the central figure and then echoed across the animal world. Whether human or animal, male or female, the defining trait remains constant: the ability to stand firm under pressure. What later traditions preserved as metaphysical “steadfastness” originates here as something far more immediate and observable - the condition of being unyielding in the face of force.

The visual depiction represented by the standing confrontation scene and the Pashupati seal does not depict two unrelated motifs, but rather two stages of a single conceptual framework centered on immovability. In the standing form, immovability is expressed through direct opposition to force. The figure is upright, the animals are in motion, and the meaning of *stha* is made visible through resistance. The body does not collapse, retreat, or yield; instead, it maintains position against active attack. In this context, immovability is demonstrated as steadfastness under pressure.

In contrast, the Pashupati seal presents a transformation in which the same category of force remains present but no longer manifests as aggression. The elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, and bull (with some seals depicting crocodiles) - each representing distinct forms of mass, charge, predation, and grounded strength - continue to surround the central figure. Their presence is not incidental, but structurally consistent with earlier depictions of force. However, their behavior has changed. They no longer attack. The central figure, seated in virasana and positioned symmetrically within the composition, does not resist force; rather, force itself has been rendered inactive.



This shift indicates progression from demonstrated immovability to established immovability. In the earlier scene, the principle of *stha* is enacted through visible resistance. In the Pashupati seal, that same principle has reached a state of completion. The central figure is no longer required to withstand attack because the conditions that produce attack have already been resolved. Force remains present in its most powerful natural forms, but it no longer operates as opposition.

The selection of animals reinforces this interpretation. The elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, and bull constitute a deliberate grouping of the most physically dominant and difficult-to-move creatures within the natural world. Their consistent appearance across the corpus suggests that they function as embodiments of force itself rather than as decorative or symbolic additions. To depict these animals in a state of non-aggression surrounding a composed central figure is not merely to assert dominance over them, but to demonstrate a condition in which force has been fully contained.

The presence of two deer beneath the throne further supports this structural reading. In contrast to the upper animals, which represent aggression, mass, and power, the deer embody calmness and vulnerability. Their placement beneath the enthroned figure suggests that the central position does not suppress a single type of force, but instead orders the full spectrum of natural states. The composition thus reflects a controlled equilibrium: ferocity above, gentleness below, and immovable stillness at the center.

Taken together, these elements indicate that the Pashupati seal does not simply portray a figure associated with animals, but rather the culmination of a principle first expressed in the standing form. The figure is no longer defined by the ability to resist force, but by the capacity to render force itself inactive. Immovability is no longer demonstrated through opposition; it is established as a condition in which opposition no longer arises.

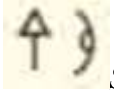
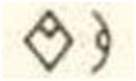
The Independent Use of *khya/kya* as a Surname Marker

A key point in the reading of this inscription is that the sign for *khya/kya* appears independently, rather than as part of a longer grammatical term or phrase such as *akhya* or *ca akhya*. It is a signal that the prior term combined with *khya* functions as a surname or personal name rather than a descriptive or declarative expression.

In Sanskrit, words such as *akhya* are typically associated with meanings like “called,” “named,” or “known as,” and therefore belong to a grammatical or descriptive register. That is not what is present here. The sign under discussion is not preceded by the expected initial vowel that would produce *akhya*, nor is it embedded in the larger phrase of *ca akhya*. Instead, *khya/kya* stands by itself as the terminal and defining portion of a name. Both forms, *khya* and *kya*, are well attested in Sanskrit as terminal endings for *names* or *onomastic titles* including works of literature.

akhya *ca akhya*

This independence supports the conclusion that *khya/kya* is functioning onomastically, not grammatically. In other words, it does not describe the preceding element; it helps form a family-name or surname structure. Under this reading, *Srukhya/Srukya* and *Bhukhya/Bhukya* are not phrases to be broken apart into a descriptive clause, but a complete personal name.

 *Srukhya/Srukya*  *Bhukhya/Bhukya*

The importance of this distinction is methodological as well as linguistic. If *khya/kya* is treated incorrectly as part of *akhya*, the result is a forced grammatical reading that obscures the inscription’s actual naming structure. By contrast, reading the sign for *khya/kya* as an independent surname element preserves the integrity of the sequence and explains why the form behaves as a name rather than as a verbal or descriptive construction.

Within community traditions, the Bhukya clan—attested among Banjara/Lambadi groups—is sometimes associated with northern origins, including Rajasthan, and with claims of Rajput or martial ancestry. These associations are preserved primarily in oral and ethnographic accounts rather than uniformly established historical records. These traditions situate the group within a broader historical pattern in which clans trace their ancestry to northern regions and to warrior lineages before dispersing into central and southern India. While such accounts are preserved

primarily through oral history and later genealogical narratives, they are consistent with known patterns of migration and social reorganization across the subcontinent.

This observation becomes particularly relevant when considered alongside the recurring presence of warrior-associated terms in the inscriptions, such as *jaja*. Although these terms have not yet been observed directly adjacent to *Bhukya* within the same sequence, their frequency suggests that warrior identity is a significant thematic component of the corpus. The coexistence of surname structures (e.g., *-khya*) and warrior terminology (e.g., *jaja, vira*) raises the possibility that the inscriptions encode named individuals or lineages associated with martial roles, even if the pairing is not yet explicitly attested in a single instance. Taken together, the Bhukya surname tradition, its reported Rajasthani and warrior-linked origins, and the structural presence of -khya in the inscriptions provide a coherent framework for interpreting Srukhya as a name possibly belonging to a lineage potentially connected to a warrior caste context.

Further Discussion on the Linguistic Rules:

Conditioned Glide Formation in the Vocalic Layer

A further refinement of the vocalic system is the presence of conditioned glide formation, observable in specific environments where one vowel-bearing element modifies another. This phenomenon is not general across all signs but appears to be restricted and structurally governed.

Glide as a Conditioned Outcome

The value of a diacritic mark is fundamentally vocalic. However, its surface realization is not invariant. In particular, the vowel *i* demonstrates a conditioned expansion to *iy* when applied to an explicit vowel-bearing sign.

At present, this behavior is observed specifically in cases where the i-mark modifies the primary A-sign. In such instances, the expected simple vowel realization (*i*) does not occur. Instead, the combination produces a glide sequence, realized as *iy*.

This suggests that the system does not treat all vowel modifications as direct substitutions. Rather, when a vowel is applied to an already vocalic base, the result may be a transitional or composite form, preserving both vocalic elements through glide formation.

Structural Constraint

Crucially, this glide formation is not freely distributed. It does not appear across all instances of the i-mark, but is conditioned by the host sign. The following distinction can therefore be made:

- i-mark on non-vocalic primary signs → *i*
- i-mark on the primary A-sign → *iy*

This indicates that the glide is not an independent phonetic value of the diacritic itself, but a relational outcome arising from vowel-on-vowel interaction.